# LIGN 170: Psycholinguistics

Ebru Evcen
UC San Diego, Summer 2024

**Class time:** Tuesdays & Thursdays 2-4:50 PM
**Class location:** CENTR 205
**Modality:** In-person; attendance strongly advised; podcasted.
**Course website:** sites.google.com/ucsd.edu/lign170 & Canvas

**Instructor:** Ebru Evcen
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**Office hours:** Mon 1-2pm (virtual) & Thu 12-1pm
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**TA:** Penny Pan
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**Office hours:** Fri 1-2pm (virtual)
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## Course description

How do people do things with language? How do babies learn to turn sounds into words while surrounded by all sorts of noises? How does our brain make sense of complicated sentences we hear? How do we think of the right words so quickly when we're talking? How do we understand the hidden messages in what people say, finding meaning beyond the words they use? This course is a theoretical introduction to psycholinguistics - the study of how humans learn, represent, comprehend, and produce language. The course aims to provide students with a solid understanding of both the research methodologies used in psycholinguistic research and many of the well-established findings in the field. Topics covered include language acquisition, word recognition, sentence processing, sentence production, and the communicative aspect of language.

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

1. Describe fundamental concepts in language acquisition
2. Explain the cognitive processes involved in word recognition and sentence processing and the mechanisms of sentence production, focusing on how the brain interprets and constructs complex linguistic structures in real time
3. Analyze the use of pragmatic cues in language to understand how speakers convey meanings beyond the literal words
4. Identify and describe common psycholinguistic experimental paradigms, such as behavioral tasks (e.g., acceptability judgments, priming, inference tasks), self-paced reading, and eye tracking
5. Critically assess psycholinguistics research by reviewing methodology and findings, identifying research questions, describing experimental designs, evaluating results and conclusions
6. Identify challenges and propose solutions to improve inclusivity in psycholinguistics research, addressing native speaker bias, WEIRD population limitations, and the generalizability of findings.

**Prerequisites:** LIGN 101 Introduction to the Study of Language, or equivalent basic knowledge of linguistics. Having watched Arrival does not count ☺.

## Course materials

There is no required textbook for this course. Students who are interested in supplementary reading material may consult the following textbook, which is available electronically through UCSD Library (a UCSD IP address is required for access):

Sedivy, J. (2014). Language in mind: An introduction to psycholinguistics. Sinauer Associates.

Note, however, that reading the textbook is **not** a substitute for attending lectures, as the contents of the lectures and activities will be different than that in the textbook.

A list of additional papers is provided separately.

## Course Schedule

| Week | Day | Date | Topic | Reading | Due |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Tue | 7/2 | **Psycholinguistics unpacked:**<br>Introduction – why and how we study language<br>**Lecture:** What is (not) language?<br>**Lecture:** Language diversity | - | Welcome aboard<br>(due Fri 7/5) |
| | Thu | 7/4 | Independence Day Holiday - No Class | - | Checkpoint 1<br>(due Sun 7/7) |
| 2 | Tue | 7/9 | **Mastering babble:**<br>**Lecture:** Language acquisition: sounds & words<br>**In class work:** What the heck is QALMRI? | Crump & Logan (2010); Winawer et al (2007) | |
| | Thu | 7/11 | **Lecture:** Language acquisition: words & syntax<br>**Lecture:** Language comprehension: word recognition | - | Checkpoint 2<br>(due Sun 7/14) |
| 3 | Tue | 7/16 | **Inside the listener's mind:**<br>**Lecture:** Language comprehension: sentence processing I<br>**Lecture:** Language comprehension: sentence processing II | - | QALMRI 1<br>(due Tue 7/16) |
| | Thu | 7/18 | **Lecture:** Language production: words<br>**In class work:** QALMRI workshop & poster prep | Pick your adventure sign-up here | Checkpoint 3<br>(due Sun 7/21) |
| 4 | Tue | 7/23 | **Words at work:**<br>**Lecture:** Language production: sentences<br>**In class work:** poster presentation | | Final project sign-up here<br>(due Thu 7/25) |
| | Thu | 7/25 | **Lecture:** Beyond what is said: Perspective-taking<br>**Discussion:** Diversifying psycholinguistics I<br>**In class work:** Final project prep | Bylund (2022) | Checkpoint 4<br>(due Sun 7/28) |
| 5 | Tue | 7/30 | **Did you mean...?**<br>**Lecture:** Beyond what is said: Audience design<br>**In class work:** QALMRI workshop & poster prep | Pick your adventure sign-up here | QALMRI 2<br>(due Tue 7/30) |
| | Thu | 8/1 | **In class work:** poster presentation<br>**Discussion:** Diversifying psycholinguistics II<br>Wrap up | Cheng et al (2021) | – |
| FINAL PROJECT: QALMRI +++: due Saturday 8/3, 11:59 pm | | | | | |

## Assessment

1. **Welcome aboard (0.5% x2 = 1% - Bonus!)**
   - Welcome Survey
   - Discussion Post: Introduce yourself and connect with classmates
2. **Learning checkpoints (10% x 4 = 40%)**
   There will be four checkpoints throughout the course that are due on Sundays by 11:59 pm.Each checkpoint will consist of a variety of question types, with a focus on multiple-choice, fill-in-the-blank, and short-response questions to test comprehension and critical thinking. These quizzes are meant to be quick reviews of the weekly content and help keep track of your learning.
   **Gradescope:** We'll be using Gradescope for learning checkpoints and other submission. If you have any problems with this process, please contact your instructor.
3. **QALMRI Reports (5% x 2 = 10%)**
   The first step in our course is mastering how to read journal articles effectively using the QALMRI method. You will read two papers and submit a QALMRI report. This acronym stands for Questions, Alternatives, Logic, Methods, Results, and Inferences, each representing a critical component of research articles. The QALMRI method will be our primary tool for both critically evaluating experimental studies and organizing your own experiment proposals. It aids in connecting theoretical frameworks with empirical data by clarifying the research questions, the methodologies employed, and the significance of the findings.

   Detailed instructions on the QALMRI method and sample QALMRIs can be found on the course website.

   **List of papers:** Brown-Schmidt & Tanenhaus (2006); De Neys & Schaeken (2007); Felser et al. (2003); Hochstein et al. (2017); Kamide et al. (2003);Patson & Warren (2013)

   **Sign up for papers/groups here**, first come first served!

   *QALMRI Reports Submission:*

   - **Y**ou are required to submit two QALMRI reports: the first on Tuesday of Week 3 and the second on Tuesday of Week 5.
   - **Y**ou will have the opportunity to work in groups to discuss the paper, improving your understanding through collaborative discussion.
   - **T**he initial submission will be graded for completion (due before class by 2:00 PM). Post-discussion, you are encouraged to revise and resubmit your report by 11:59 PM on the same Tuesday, with the revised submission being graded for content.
4. **In class work (20%)**
   Students will participate in graded in-class activities aimed at preparing them for the final project. In these sessions, students will:

   - Utilize class time for collaborative study, comparing QALMRI reports and critiquing research papers together.
   - Create a mini poster using Google Jamboard, on a different empirical paper for each group (a sign-up sheet will be available for group and paper selection).
   - Present their mini poster in the subsequent class, highlighting key findings and discussion points from their assigned paper (15 minutes each group).

   These presentations will provide a forum to discuss possible improvements in experimental design, potential changes, and critical thinking questions concerning incidental variables, result validity, population effects, and alternative research methods.

   Active participation is essential for full credit in these activities. Students can miss one in-class activity without penalty.

5. **Final project: QALMRI +++ (30%)**

   For the final project, students may work individually or in pairs to complete an enhanced QALMRI report on a selected research paper. This extended version, QALMRI+++, not only requires the standard QALMRI analysis but also includes additional critical expansions that propose a follow-up study design. A list of eligible papers are provided, allowing students to choose a topic that aligns with their interests. **Please sign up for a paper here by Thursday July 25**. You are encouraged to submit it as early as possible.

   **List of papers:** Brown-Schmidt & Konopka (2015); Dudley et al. (2015); Fernald et al. (2001); Ferreira & Yoshita (2003); Gout et al. (2004);Ji & Papafragou (2020); Keysar et al. (2000); Kursat & Degen (2020); Ozge et al. (2019); Papadopoulou & Clahsen (2003); Skordos et al. (2020);Syrett & Aravind (2022); Traxler (2005);Wittenberg & Snedeker (2013)

   *Components of QALMRI+++ include:*

   (a) Standard QALMRI report

   (b) Critical Thinking Expansion (First +):

   - Identify potential incidental variables that could influence the study's outcomes and discuss the reliability of the results.
   - Evaluate how the subject population might affect the task and predict outcomes for a different demographic.
   - Propose alternative approaches to address the same/related research questions. This could involve suggesting different experimental methods, adjusting the experimental design to control for additional variables, or using diverse populations to enhance the generalizability of the findings.
   - Outline predictions for your proposed follow-up study.

   (c) Diversifying Psycholinguistics (Second +): Explore strategies to make the findings more generalizable and applicable outside the laboratory environment, drawing on insights from class discussions on"Diversifying Psycholinguistics I".

   (d) Defining participants (Third +): Clearly define the term "native speakers" within the context of your proposed study, drawing on insights from class discussions on "Diversifying Psycholinguistics II".

# Course policies

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## Attendance

All lectures and office hours are scheduled to take place in person. Lectures will be podcasted and the recordings will be made available on Canvas shortly after each lecture. Active attendance and participation in lectures and activities are expected of all students.

## Academic honesty

Students are encouraged to discuss and collaborate on homework assignments. However, all submitted work must be individually written and reflect your own understanding.

Any form of academic dishonesty, including plagiarism and cheating, will be dealt with according to UC San Diego's policy on academic integrity. Further details are available here. If you are using ideas or content from someone other than yourself, you must cite where you obtained those ideas or content from, even if it is from your classmates. Suspected plagiarism or cheating will be taken seriously and will be investigated. If it is determined that plagiarism or cheating has occurred, the case will be reported to the Academic Integrity Office. In addition, a student who was found to have plagiarized or cheated may receive a zero on the assignment or receive an "F" for the course.

## Use of AI tools

The use of language models and AI tools like ChatGPT is strongly discouraged in this course. These tools may compromise your grades due to their tendency to produce inaccurate or irrelevant content. More critically, reliance on such tools can hinder direct engagement with course material and achievement of learning outcomes. Remember, we can detect its use!

### Grading policy

All assignments are expected to be submitted by the deadline. If you anticipate needing extra time to complete an assignment, please contact me directly (not the TA) at least 24 working hours before the due date. In most cases, I am willing to grant an extension of 1-2 days. Please be aware that due to the condensed nature of the summer session, we are operating on a tight schedule. Any assignments submitted late without prior approval will incur a penalty of 5% per day. For example, an assignment that is two days late will receive a 10% deduction from the final grade.

If you believe that you have been incorrectly graded, you should reach out to me (not the TA) via email. In your email, you should provide appropriate justification for why you think your grade should be adjusted, and you should make specific reference to the part of the assignment that you think should be regraded. All requests for grade adjustments should be no more than 7 days after the release of the grade. All grades after 7 days of their release are final.

The course will be graded according to this scale:

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A+ | 97%+ | A | 93%-96.99% | A- | 90%-92.99% |
| B+ | 87%-89.99% | B | 83%-86.99% | B- | 80%-82.99% |
| C+ | 77%-79.99% | C | 73%-76.99% | C- | 70%-72.99% |
| D | 60%-69.99% | F | <60% | | |

### Extra credit:

1. SONA Research Participation (2%): SONA is an online system used to manage research participation credits. You can sign up for language-related experiments, among other psychological and cognitive science studies, through the SONA website. Each credit typically represents about half an hour of in-person participation or one hour of an online study. Avoid waiting until the last minute to participate as available experiments may be limited. More information and detailed instructions on how to sign up can be found here.
2. Teaching Evaluations (1%) An extra 1% credit will be awarded to everyone if the response rate to the Student Evaluation of Teaching reaches 80% or higher.

## Student Resources

- If you are facing any difficulty in class or if external circumstances are impacting your ability to learn, please reach out to me so that we can figure out a solution that best accommodates your situation. You may also reach out to Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) for mental health support. CAPS is a great place to go to find somebody to talk to, whether once, or in the longer term.
- Student with Disabilities: students requesting accommodations and services for this course due to a disability need to provide a current Authorization for Accommodation (AFA) letter issued by the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD) prior to eligibility for requests. For more info, please check the OSD website here
- If you need help with academic writing, The Writing Hub is a great place to go for for help with improving and refining your academic writing.
- Library tutorials: How to read an article: This tutorial guides you through effective strategies for comprehending academic articles. Strategies for searching databases: Learn how to efficiently navigate and search databases to find the most relevant academic resources for your research. APA Citation Style: This tutorial offers a comprehensive overview of the APA citation style, helping you properly cite sources and avoid plagiarism.
- Basic Needs Hub: This is a great on campus resource for helping members of the UCSD community with food security, housing stability, and financial wellness.

## Acknowledgements

Many thanks to Judith Degen for providing the original materials that inspired some elements of this class.

We also respectfully acknowledge that we live, learn, and work on the land of the Kumeyaay/Kumiai nation.